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ADVISORY BOARD ROUNDTABLE

SESSION 1

RECOMMENDATIONS on How AI Can Accelerate Economic Diversification in Resource-Rich Economies

CONTRIBUTORS

- Rana Zamai, Chairwoman, Women Mining Association – KSA
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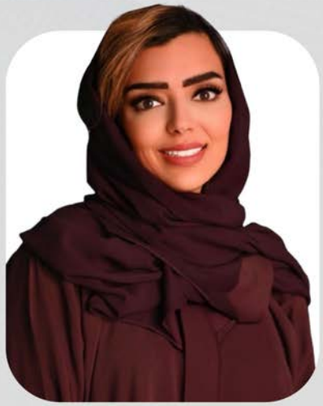
SOUNDINGS

"AI is unlocking high-value industries by advancing robotics, automation, and smart manufacturing, creating new opportunities across mining, energy, biotechnology, tourism, and digital services."



Rana Zamai
Chairwoman, Women Mining Association - KSA

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Unlock New High-Value Industries Through AI

Rana Zamai
Chairwoman
Women Mining Association – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Artificial intelligence should be viewed not simply as a tool for improving existing industries but as the foundation for creating entirely new economic sectors. While resource-rich economies have traditionally relied on hydrocarbons, mining, and heavy industry, AI presents an opportunity to expand into advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, digital health, intelligent tourism, robotics, and knowledge-intensive services.

The greatest economic value lies in applying AI across the full industrial value chain—from exploration and predictive maintenance to autonomous operations and advanced manufacturing. Smart factories, AI-enabled mineral exploration, digital financial ecosystems, and precision healthcare demonstrate how emerging technologies can create industries that generate higher-value employment while strengthening national competitiveness.

Rather than replacing traditional sectors, AI enables them to become innovation platforms that stimulate wider economic diversification. Improvements in productivity lower operating costs, increase efficiency, and free investment capital for new industries capable of competing globally.

Countries that successfully integrate AI into both established and emerging sectors will build more resilient economies that are less dependent on commodity cycles. Economic diversification therefore becomes a process of creating entirely new sources of national value rather than merely improving existing production. AI provides the technological catalyst to transform resource wealth into diversified, innovation-led growth capable of sustaining long-term prosperity. ■

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SOUNDINGS

"Building future economies starts with investing in young people, giving them practical opportunities to develop advanced technologies and become the innovators who will shape tomorrow's industries."

Abdullah AlSalmani
TEDx Speaker, Co-Founder & CEO, SpacePoint

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Build the Talent That Will Build the Future

Abdullah AlSalmani
TEDx Speaker
Co-Founder & CEO, SpacePoint

No nation can achieve sustainable AI-driven economic diversification without first developing the people capable of creating, deploying, and continually improving advanced technologies. Infrastructure, investment, and digital platforms are important, but human capability remains the decisive competitive advantage.

Preparing the future workforce requires education systems that move beyond theory towards practical experience in engineering, artificial intelligence, robotics, data science, and emerging technologies. Students should be exposed to real-world projects from an early age, developing the technical confidence needed to solve complex industrial challenges and build entirely new enterprises.

Economic diversification depends not only on adopting imported technologies but also on creating domestic innovation capacity. Developing engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers, and technology leaders ensures that future industries are designed, owned, and scaled locally rather than remaining dependent on external expertise.

Strong partnerships between education providers, government, and industry accelerate this process by aligning skills development with emerging economic priorities. Practical learning environments also encourage entrepreneurship, enabling young innovators to transform technical knowledge into commercially viable businesses.

AI ultimately creates opportunities at the intersection of multiple disciplines, combining engineering, sustainability, space technology, digital services, manufacturing, and scientific research. Building multidisciplinary talent today establishes the foundation for resilient knowledge economies capable of sustaining long-term innovation, attracting investment, and generating globally competitive industries for decades to come. ■

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SOUNDINGS

"Clear governance and strong data privacy frameworks are essential because organizations will only embrace AI when they trust how information is managed."

Thanakarthik Kumar
Founder & CEO, Sustainabyte Technologies Private Limited

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Prioritise High-ROI AI Use Cases That Fund Future Innovation

Thanakarthik Kumar
Founder & CEO, Sustainabyte Technologies Private Limited

Economic diversification succeeds when AI investments generate measurable business value before expanding into broader transformation initiatives. Rather than pursuing technology for its own sake, organisations should first identify practical applications that deliver immediate operational improvements, clear financial returns, and demonstrable productivity gains.

Energy efficiency, industrial optimisation, predictive maintenance, and intelligent resource management represent ideal starting points because they reduce costs while improving environmental performance. Early successes build confidence among investors, encourage wider adoption across industry, and establish evidence that AI creates tangible economic outcomes rather than speculative promise.

This approach also creates a sustainable investment cycle. Savings generated from high-performing AI deployments can be reinvested into workforce development, research, advanced digital infrastructure, and emerging industries. Diversification therefore becomes self-financing, with each successful implementation creating additional capacity for innovation.

Equally important is focusing on existing operational challenges before introducing entirely new technologies. Enhancing proven systems with AI often delivers greater economic impact than replacing them outright. Incremental improvements reduce implementation risk while accelerating adoption across both public and private sectors.

Economic transformation is therefore driven by disciplined investment, measurable outcomes, and continuous reinvestment. AI delivers its greatest national impact when productivity gains today become the funding mechanism for tomorrow's innovation economy. ■

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SOUNDINGS

"Saudi Arabia is attracting global AI investment, but the biggest challenge remains developing the talent needed to match the pace of technology adoption."

Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co & Tilad Institute;
Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance

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Align AI With Sustainable Economic Transformation

Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co. & Tilad Institute;
Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance

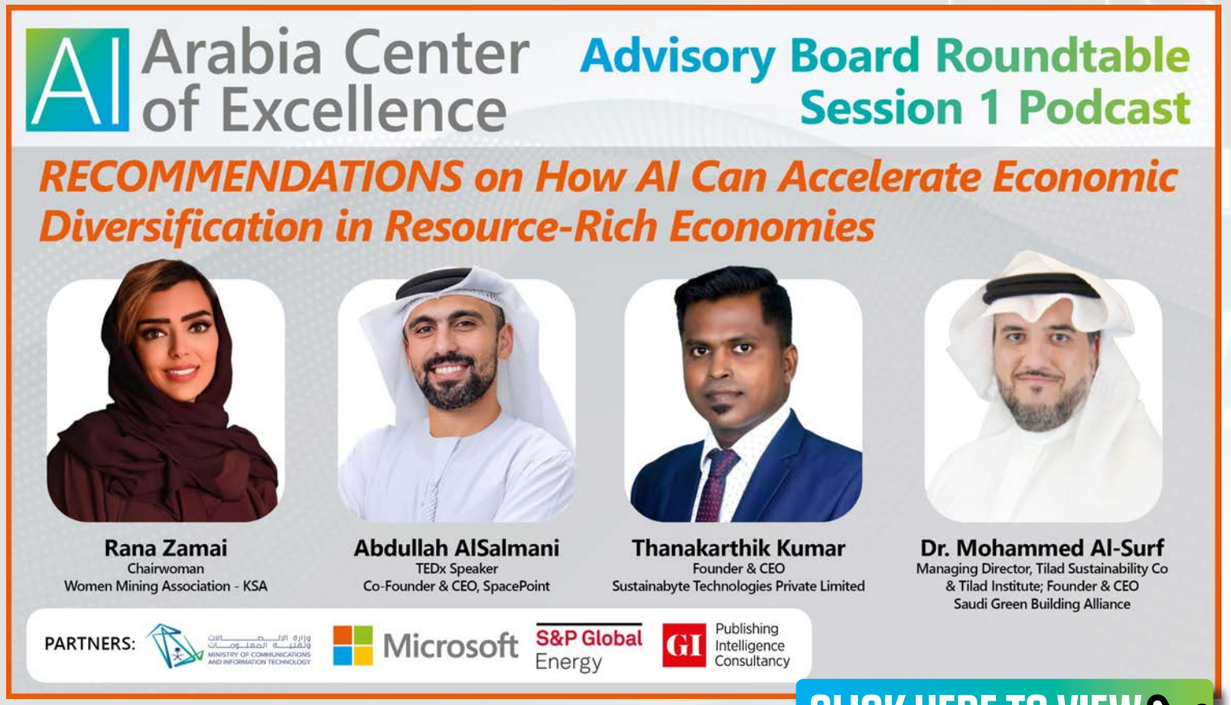
Economic diversification should pursue long-term resilience rather than short-term technological adoption. Artificial intelligence provides an opportunity to improve productivity while simultaneously advancing sustainability, resource efficiency, and environmental performance across both existing and emerging industries.

The greatest value emerges when AI supports national sustainability objectives through smarter buildings, intelligent infrastructure, efficient energy systems, water optimisation, circular economy initiatives, and low-carbon industrial development. These applications strengthen economic competitiveness while reducing resource intensity and improving environmental outcomes.

Resource-rich economies possess a unique opportunity to become global leaders in sustainable industrial transformation by combining natural resource advantages with advanced digital capabilities. AI enables industries to optimise operations, reduce waste, improve asset performance, and make better long-term investment decisions based on predictive insights rather than reactive management.

Diversification should therefore be evaluated not only by the number of new industries created but also by the quality, resilience, and sustainability of future economic growth. Technology investments that deliver commercial value while strengthening environmental performance generate broader benefits for governments, businesses, and society.

Successful AI strategies will integrate economic development with sustainability rather than treating them as separate priorities. By embedding intelligence across infrastructure, industry, and urban development, countries can create diversified economies that are simultaneously more competitive, more resilient, and better prepared for future environmental and economic challenges. ■



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